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DISCUSSION

APPEARANCE AND REALITY, AND THE SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS.

MR. W. P. MONTAGUE'S paper on "The Antinomy and its Implications for Logical Theory"¹ contains a statement which in my opinion so pointedly affirms a general error, that I should be glad if I might draw attention to it.

My comment is confined to Section II, "The Method of Ultra-Rationalism," and within that to the assumption and statements which identify the modern doctrine of appearance and reality with a two-world theory according to which the world of sense is "discarded" (p. 227) and is "subjective" (*ibid.*); and consequently pronounce the distinction in question to be valueless for the solution of problems. I cite at length a passage which makes the meaning quite clear. After saying, rightly as I think, that Kant solves no difficulty about space by making it subjective, the writer proceeds (p. 229): "The same comfortless conclusion comes to us from Mr. Bradley. The qualities and relations revealed in our experience cannot, so he tells us, be reconciled with reason, for if a relation is to relate it must make a difference to its terms, *i. e.*, make them other than the terms which we apprehended as related. It is too bad that there is this difficulty (if it is a difficulty). But how does it help it to *deny that the world of sense is 'real' and to assign it a status of 'appearance'*?"² The twin concepts of reality and appearance may be valid and fruitful or they may not. Whether good or bad they are not in question. The answer involved in the quality-relation situation did not depend on the nature of 'reality' or the nature of 'appearance,' but simply on the nature of all qualities and relations. Are the contradictions or the tragedies of our experience mitigated by assuming or even proving *that beyond our experience there is another experience in which they do not occur*?³ The intellectual and moral evils in our world of appearance are one thing. Why then should we suddenly change the subject (unless of course it proves embarrassing) and begin talking about an absolute reality? (p. 229) . . . In every case in which we seek to cure an intellectual discord such as an antinomy, or a moral

¹ *Studies in the History of Ideas*. Columbia University Press, 1918.

² My italics.

³ My italics.

discord such as a sin or a pain by changing the metaphysical status of the experience in which it occurs from real to unreal, we are committing the fallacy of irrelevant conclusion. For it is the actual nature of the experience and not the metaphysical status of 'subjective' or 'objective' with which we should concern ourselves."

To understand the relation of Appearance and Reality is the condition *sine qua non* of genuine philosophy. It is the merit of the above passage that, stating the relation erroneously, it formulates its error precisely. It explicitly identifies the doctrine familiar to modern philosophy, and derived from Plato, with the two world theory the ghost of which Plato laid in philosophy,¹ but which continually rises from the dead to haunt the common-sense thinker.

I will briefly mention three considerations affecting the alleged identity of the distinction between Appearance and Reality with the two-world theory.

1. What the plain man is told about the philosopher's handling of experience.

2. How the plain man really handles his own experience.

3. That the philosopher really handles his experience in the same way as the plain man handles his own.

1. The plain man is told, as here, that the philosopher who speaks of appearance and reality is giving these names to sense and reason respectively, calling them in the same order subjective and objective. He is told, as here, that the point of the distinction is to get rid of the puzzles and pains attaching to the data of sense. And the way in which it gets rid of them, so he is here informed, is by substituting for the world of sense, discarded as unreal, a different experience or other world, invented by the philosopher, and called by him the real or objective or absolute world. This world is invented to escape the puzzle and pain which sensuous experience brings, and it does so simply by leaving it out and drawing attention to something else. Thus, by whatever name you call the substituted world, its effect on the situation is the same, and that is, none at all.

Now it is all-important, before going further, to make it thoroughly clear that philosophy has no quarrel with the plain man's handling of his own experience. On the contrary, it holds his method to be sound; and it is that method and no other which philosophy itself adopts and pursues.

What it does impeach and deny is this strange story, derived from hearsay and verbal confusion, which the plain man's informants

¹ See below, p. 293.

provide him with as an account of the distinction between Appearance and Reality.

I will now describe very shortly the plain man's handling of his own daily experience, and will then proceed to show that the procedure of philosophy with regard to Appearance and Reality is just the same as this, only pursued further, and over a larger field.

2. No phrases are more constantly in our mouths than those which say in one form or another, "It looks like that, but it is something different." Without them, or an equivalent meaning, no one could get on for more than half an hour of his day's work. That work, whether theory or practice—it makes no odds—consists entirely in judging the look of things, and correcting judgments of it. Especially this is the method of practice. All skilled work has a tentative side, from lighting a fire or cutting down a tree to treating an ailment. "This is what we want—no, not quite; that,—no, that; now we've got it right; "*i. e.*, you keep correcting the suggestions of the first look till you get what you can rest satisfied with. Or in pure theory: "The strike situation looks better." "I don't know, there's that awkward feature." "The real fact is, there's a complete upset of the old Unionism." Or in questions of pain: "He's had a rough time." "Yes, but he's twice the man he was," or, "X's loss is irreparable." "Well, but how much it is to have had him."

In such or such-like an atmosphere of Appearance and Reality the man of ordinary sense and courage moves. Three things about it stare us in the face.

α. There is no such contrast concerned as that supposed to exist between sense and reason.

β. 'Appearances' are recognized not by being subjective or containing an element of sense, but by being affirmed in contradiction with one another.

γ. Reality is recognized not by being 'objective' as against 'subjective,' nor by being rid of the element of sense, but by being a system of appearances from which contradiction has been eliminated. What you first thought, or what looked like the first thing to try, was wrong. You then added more perception, more thought, a further trial, and at last it came right. What it looked like at first was wrong, but it was not unreal, and it was not nothing. It led up to the rest, and continued within it or beside it; but it did not show all that had to be seen to give you the complete situation; that is, to put you in possession of the reality, the full system of the appearances, of which the first look, and each successive look and the progressive combination of them, were parts.

3. Now this same atmosphere of Appearance and Reality, which thus governs all ordinary thought and action, is that in which philosophy lives. There has been philosophy which has gone astray after the thing-in-itself. But not the philosophy of which the writer is speaking. It follows Plato, and "Plato laid the ghost of the two-world theory which had haunted Greek philosophy since the time of Parmenides—He had shown already in the Sophist that to be an image was not to be nothing. An appearance is an appearance, and is only unreal if we take it for what it is not."¹ In Plato "there is no attempt to shirk the difficulty (of the phenomena of the visible heavens) by referring the irregularity of the planetary motions to the short-comings of the sensible world, or to 'matter,' or to an evil world-soul, as popular Platonism did later. Nor is there any attempt to represent the phenomena as illusory; on the contrary, the whole object of the enquiry is to 'save' them. The appearances remain exactly what they were, only now we know what they mean. The gulf between the intelligible and the sensible has so far been bridged; the visible motions of the heavenly bodies have been referred to an intelligible system, or, in other words, they have been seen in the light of the Good."²

The only difference between the philosopher's handling of experience and that which we have described as the plain man's is that the former α , draws from a wider field, β , uses the principle of progression consciously, γ , makes some use of analogy in meeting the principle's demands. Of course these are not total differences. We all do these things in common life, and common sense and experience justify us. If the plain man, and the popular philosopher too, would carry into philosophy their practical and daily method and directness, and dismiss hearsay and tradition about technical antitheses, they would apprehend much more truth.

Thus we see that it is a contradiction in terms to say that replacing appearance by reality solves no problem. To restate appearances as the reality is what solving a problem means. It is replacing contradictory looks of things not by a different experience in another world, but by the same looks adjusted into harmony by reconstruction in combination with more of the same kind. The world of reality is the world of appearances, and there is no other. The difference is in the completeness with which it is apprehended.

The misconception which I began by referring to offers to treat the real or absolute of philosophy as a thing-in-itself, *i. e.*, as some-

¹ Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, Part I, p. 349.

² *Ibid.*

thing inaccessible to human experience. "'Transcendental' is for the sophisticated philosopher the equivalent of 'supernatural' for the plain man."¹ The three distinctions just mentioned explain why this is not so, even if the absolute is something beyond what a human being can completely feel.

1. *The Wider Field*.—No one would be mad enough to say that we may not interpret what we individually experience by help of the experience of others and of greater minds. To attempt such a prohibition would arrest interpretation altogether. But if we may correct and amplify the meaning of life by what we can learn of Shakespeare or Newton or St. Francis, the transcendence of our given personal experience is admitted, and how far we go is only a question of how far in fact our expanded experience takes us.²

2. *The Conscious Principle*.—You cannot send away a logical principle when and where you please like a cab. If you can go on inferring, you must. And naturally, if you are attending to the process, it will take you farther than if you leave it to take care of itself, under pressure of practice only. Thus you get contradictions and solutions which have not suggested themselves to the plain man.

3. *Analogy*.—All expansion of our experience is in some degree a matter of analogy and construction. We have seen that we cannot possibly restrict ourselves to what is given to us 'personally,' and if logical conditions indicate an experience of a certain type, it is quite in accordance with our everyday quiet procedure to fill it in by help of analogy.

In the case of terms and relations indeed this extension is not necessary. We have already plain given experience for transcending them—the experience of any concrete felt whole. And we have no experience of them *per se*, that is, apart from such a fuller concrete being. So that their artificial nature is simply and definitely given. But even the absolute itself, in so far as it is conceived to be something more than a human individual could experience, is perfectly continuous with the appearances familiar to us and is an expansion of them just on the same sort of terms as is every enlargement of my private life and continuity of it with that of others. In my judgment to master the open secret of this continuity is the indispensable propædæutic to serious philosophy. Platonic scholarship has now done its part, and the aid being withdrawn which obsolete prejudices received

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

² To hold, for instance, that pain is incurably the last word of pain is to go flat in the face of experience. Hocking, *The Meaning of God*, p. 218.

from misinterpretations of Plato, it is now time that they should be purged out of the philosophical world.

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THE CONFLICTS OF REASON AND SENSE.

A REJOINDER TO DR. BOSANQUET.

THE article by Dr. Bosanquet which appears in this issue of THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW contains a criticism of two beliefs which I explained and defended in my paper on "The Antinomy and its Implications for Logical Theory."¹

That one of Dr. Bosanquet's criticisms which I wish to take up first is directed against what he considers to be my general error in admitting the existence (except in philosophies of a Thing-in-itself) of what I called "major antinomies," *i. e.*, apparent conflicts between the presentations of Sense and the theories constructed by Reason to explain those presentations. The other criticism is directed against what he considers my more specific error in charging the idealism of Mr. Bradley and his followers with a tendency to solve the alleged antinomies of the world of appearance by having recourse to an Absolute whose internal harmonies are irrelevant to the puzzles and sorrows of earth.

I. As regards the first-named criticism, Dr. Bosanquet writes: "There is no such contrast concerned as that supposed to exist between sense and reason. 'Appearances' are recognized not by being subjective or containing an element of sense, but by being affirmed in contradiction with one another. Reality is recognized not by being 'objective' as against 'subjective,' nor by being rid of the element of sense, but by being a system of appearances from which contradiction has been eliminated."

I should like to preface my comment on these statements by an expression of cordial agreement with three general positions which Dr. Bosanquet takes in his paper: (1) With the philosophies which have gone astray through postulating an unknowable 'Thing-in-itself' we need have no concern. (2) The procedure of all sound philosophy is and ought to be the same as that of the plain man in handling the problems of experience. (3) The reality which the philosopher seeks is and ought to be a system in which appearances are not supplanted or forgotten, but re-arranged or reviewed in accordance with their true meaning.

¹ *Studies in the History of Ideas.* Columbia University Press, 1918, pp. 223-248